

# Middleborough Antiquarian

*Devoted to the preservation of local history by*  
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ROBERT M. BEALS  
1918-1996

## *In Memoriam*

Robert M. Beals was a soft-spoken gentleman whose love for history was displayed in many ways. He led the Middleborough Historical Association for several years as its President. He and his wife Gladys, reached out to the community with their slide presentation on the Little People. One slide in that presentation that often brought a smile to the faces of the audience was the one that showed Bob, as a young boy, playing the role of Tom Thumb in a local performance. They spent their summers at the museum sharing the history of the town with visitors.

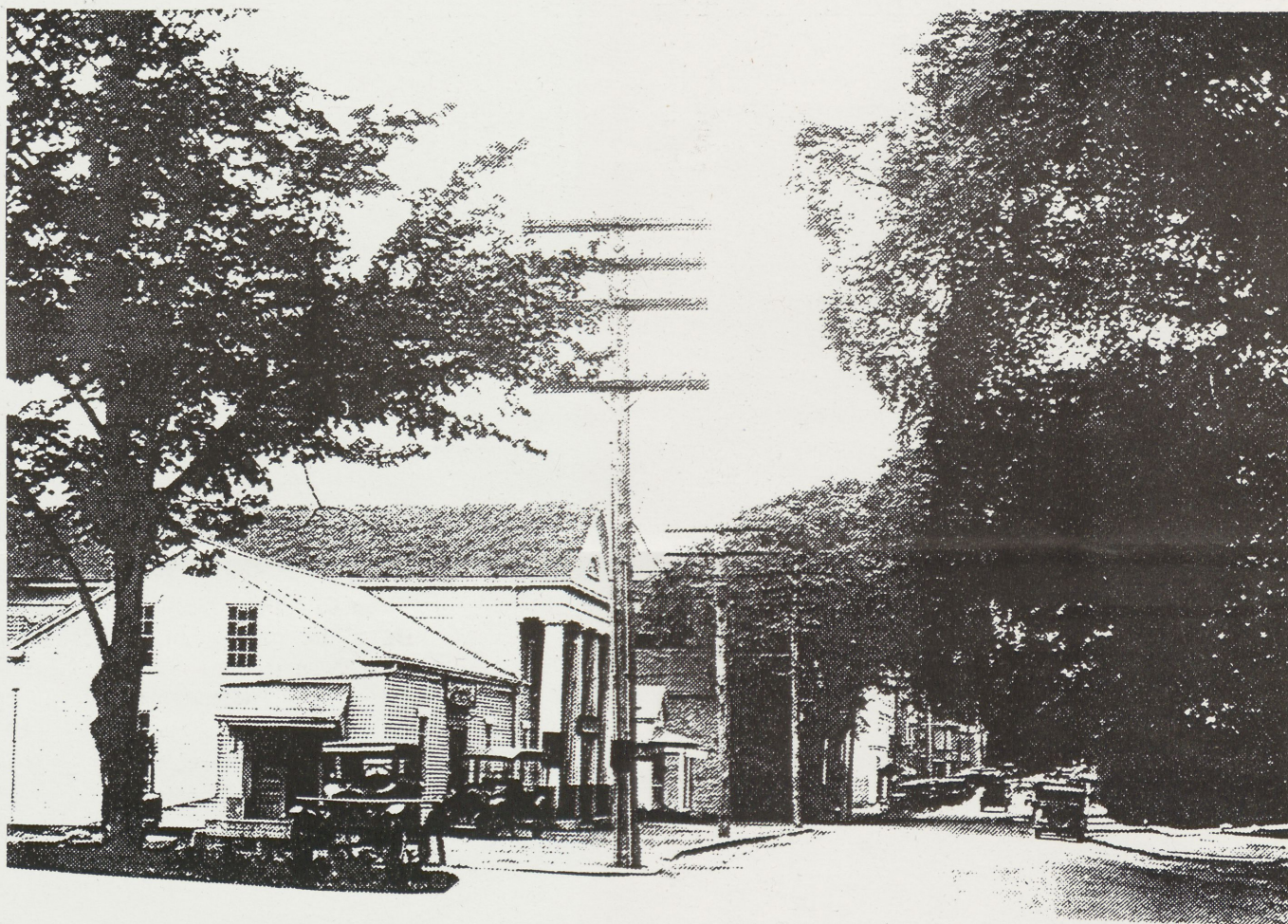
Bob oversaw the publication of *The Middleborough Antiquarian*, which without his contributions, had not been printed during the past year. His greatest love, however, was for the 1934 Maxim fire truck, which he drove with pride in the various parades in Middleborough.

The members of the association and the community benefitted from his dedication to the preservation and interpretation of the history of the town of Middleborough. As Bob often said, we will continue to "go forward with the past".



# The History of Middleborough Police Department

by Sgt. David Mackiewicz



## ORIGIN OF THE DEPARTMENT

The Middleborough Police Department was "born" on March 1, 1909. On that date Town Meeting authorized the appointment of a Chief of Police. Prior to that time public safety had been handled by a loosely organized **night watch system** administered by a three-person appointed "Committee for the Suppression of Crime." It was a system of constables and night watch officers, reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses, to provide public safety exclusively in the downtown area. The formal organization of the Middleborough Police Department took place on March 12, 1909, with the appointment of Harry W. Swift as the first Police Chief.

Although the department was formally organized in 1909, technological innovations came slowly. Keeping

up with the trend towards motor vehicles early in the century, the department added a **motorcycle**, not an automobile, for department use in 1925. This apparently, according to records, was used only for traffic enforcement. Patrol in those early days was done on foot. Calls for service from the outlying districts of town led to the hiring of an automobile from a local company. Much mention of this fact is made in the early departmental reports, with the recommendation that an automobile be purchased by the town. The practice of hiring an automobile, however, was to continue for many years.

The second motorized addition to the department was an **ambulance** purchased in 1934. Although primitive by today's standards, it was a leap forward in providing transportation for the sick and injured in those



early years. It was not until 1936, the same year that the department occupied its new police station, that the first "cruiser car" was added to the department's fleet. Today the motorcycle is gone and the ambulance service has been privatized, but the town maintains a fleet of "cruiser cars" to respond to calls for service all over town.

Communications have also changed dramatically over the years. Telephone communication for the department began with the installation of a telephone in both the police station and Chief Harry Swift's residence. Over the years much praise and thanks are given, in the chiefs' annual town reports, to the **telephone operators** in town. This was a far cry from today with the department's use of Enhanced 911 service and multiple phone lines to provide almost instantaneous response to calls for service.

Police communication has also changed with the times. In 1917 the first "call box" system was installed to provide communication among officers. It consisted of telephones at the Four Corners, Everett Square, the police station and the chief's house. In 1930 this system was replaced by a new **Gamewell System**. Many townspeople today can probably remember seeing the blue light boxes in various locations on Center St. The system served the town adequately until the late 1960's when it was replaced by hand-held portable radios. The first two-way radio system between "cruiser car" and the police station went on line in 1945. Today, with the advent of computers and mobile data terminals in the cruisers, the department has instantaneous communications with other agencies throughout the USA and Canada.

## HISTORY OF THE POLICE STATION

Prior to occupying this building, the police department had for many years been quartered in the **Peirce Academy** building. In 1932 the Peirce (pronounced "purse") Academy was razed to make way for the current U.S. Post Office on Center St. In the interim the police department was housed in a vacant storefront on North Main St.

The Peirce General Store, because of its location next to the fire station and opposite the Public Library (both new buildings at the time) and proximity to other central locations, made it desirable as a new home for the police department. Discussions to that end began in 1932 and culminated in a Town Meeting vote on April 8, 1935. At that time the "Committee on New Police Quarters," of which then Police Chief Alden C. Sisson was chairman, recommended that the town purchase from the trustees under the will of Thomas S. Peirce, the Peirce Grocery Store property on North Main St. and remodel the building into quarters for both the Police Department and the **Fourth District Court** of Plymouth County.

The town voted to accept the recommendation of the committee, and at the same town meeting, voted to appropriate a sum of money for the purpose of purchasing and remodeling the building. The original estimated cost of renovations was \$46,000, but like many other renovation projects before and since, conditions developed requiring additional monies.

The total cost of the new police station and courthouse as it stood in 1936 was **\$65,000**. Of that total, the Town of Middleborough contributed \$38,500; the United States government as a Public Works Administration project contributed \$20,700; and the Peirce Trustees contributed \$5,800.

All of the alterations were done to the inside of the building. The exterior is essentially the same today as it was in the days of the store owned by the Peirce family.

When the building was dedicated on September 1, 1936, it was noted by then Town Manager and Clerk of the Building Committee H. J. Goodale, "*it seemed fitting that the old Peirce Store, in which the fortune was accumulated which later became the Peirce Fund, and which has been of so much benefit to the Town, should be remodeled into quarters for the Police Station and for the Fourth District Court, thus converting it into a memorial to the Peirce family.*"

Structurally, the building remains largely unchanged in the intervening 61 years. A major change has been the departure of the Fourth District Court to a new building in Wareham in 1978. At that time the police department took over the courthouse wing and occupied it as administrative office space. There have been many minor changes to the police station since, many of which were financed, in part, by the same Peirce Fund that provided for the original building.

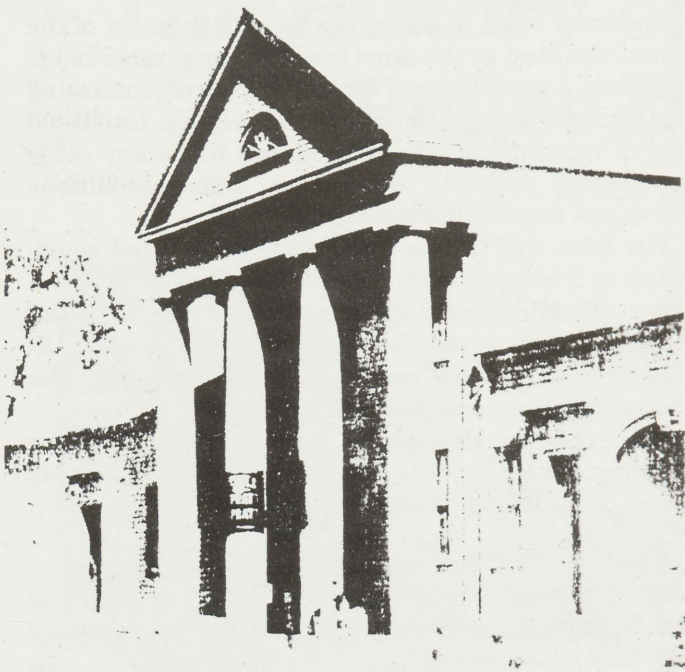
## POLICE PERSONNEL

There have been many changes in the makeup and numbers of personnel since Chief Harry W. Swift and a handful of dedicated part-time officers provided service to the town. In fact Chief Swift, in his first annual report to the town in 1909, recommended the size of the police department be increased. This, he said, was due to the fact that the "west end" of town in Everett Square was not receiving adequate protection, as the beat officer was already walking 15 miles on his beat downtown.

Through the years the use of professional full-time police officers has increased. In the early 1940's, due to **World War II**, the regular force of full and part-time officers was augmented by the creation of an Auxiliary Police unit. The use of specials and auxiliaries continues to this day.

ment proved not to be immune from the money problems that beset many work forces. This resulted in





layoffs of six permanent full-time officers in 1991. Although these positions have not been fully restored yet, most of the laid-off officers have been rehired through normal attrition of the remaining department personnel. Two other significant personnel events occurred in 1973 with the appointment of the first officer of color, and in 1977 with the first female officer.

There have been only ten chiefs in the 88 years of the departmental history. They are: Harry W. Swift, 1909-14; Louis Hathaway, 1914-19; Smith T. Sharples, 1920; Alden C. Sisson, 1921-49; Charles E. Rogers, 1949-54; William E. Gardiner, 1954-63; Lawrence Carter, 1964; Harold E. Tower, Jr., 1965-66; William E. Warner, 1967-95; and Arnold C. Salley, 1995 - present.

The makeup of the police department has changed over the years with the addition of a deputy chief and a captain at different times. Both positions have since been eliminated. The current makeup of the department consists of the chief, two lieutenants, five sergeants, two detectives, one D.A.R.E. officer, and 21 patrol officers.

## Frederick Lobl

*Teacher, Writer, Salesman, Entrepreneur, Inventor*

by Sandy Ward

On May 22, 1886, in a little town of Snorow, Province of Moravia, Austria, Mr. & Mrs. Bernard Lobl became the parents of a son, Frederick. He was the second of six children — all boys — born to Bernard Lobl (born in Pressbourg, Hungary) and Fannie (Gaurel) Lobl (born in Hradich, Austria).

His grade school education was in the local elementary school. At the age of 11, he moved to Vienna where he entered the Gymnasium, also known as the "Latin School". This was an eight year school, similar to an American prep school, where Greek, Latin, geography, history, mathematics, geometry, natural history, and physics was taught. Even though this was an eight year school, most students left after four or five years to pursue specialized studies (the arts, sciences, business, etc.). Frederick did well at the Gymnasium and was awarded a citation of merit along with a small scholarship. From here, he went on to the State Technical School. Here, he studied sugar refining, beer brewing, forestry, and agricultural machinery construction. These subjects interested him because his

hometown of Snorow was in an agricultural section of Austria. Other studies included industrial chemistry and mechanical engineering. Frederick also completed a course at a school of commerce and business administration. Further education earned him his Ph.G (Graduate in Pharmacy).

Frederick was old enough by this time to be self-supporting. He worked many nights as a teacher to the children of some wealthy families. He also wrote essays, monologues, comic skits, and a 3-act operatta titled "Follow Me to Moulin Rouge" (This later had music put to it by composer Victor Hollaender and performed in the theater). The first money earned as a writer was by accident. Mr. Lobl had written and mailed an essay to a magazine. Fortunately, for him, he sent it registered mail. The essay never reached the magazine and the post office had to pay the allowed amount of \$25.00. The monologues and comic skits were used by local entertainers, amateur shows, and social and charitable organizations.

Frederick liked the theater and through several con-



tacts, met various performers. Among them: Louis Treumann, operatta actor; Franz Lehar, writer of military marches and operattas, orchestra conductor; Franz Drdla, piano and violin player and concerto composer; Leo Fall, operatta composer; Oskar Straus, operatta composer; Alexander Girardi, actor in operattas, comedian and "Girardi" hats (low-top straw hats such as Maurice Chevalier wore) stylist; Leo Slezak (Walter Slezak's father), opera tenor; Johann Struass's widow; Karl Maria Ziehrer, the "Waltz King II"; and Victor Hollaender, operatta composer. Frederick Lobl suggested the use of miniature stage settings to make rehearsal changes on. He was never given credit for this advancement in theater production.

Frederick Lobl's work in the medical field started by a chance finding of a newspaper on a park bench. He spotted an ad for "Lexan Pills" and told the advertiser, Dr. Franz Stohr (Stohr Laboratories), that it needed to be changed, both in design and location. The new design, called a "four-liner" (a small, four-line jingle), did so well that it was also used by another large manufacturing firm, Jack Schnable & Co. Frederick Lobl was hired by Dr. Stohr as an assistant. He proved himself worthy and for his twenty-fifth birthday was given a certificate of junior membership in the firm, Stohr Laboratories. He was later sent to America to expand Dr. Stohr's business.

Frederick Lobl arrived in New York City in the beginning of May, 1914, and was to return to Austria the end of July. He never did. On June 28, 1914, Frederick received a cable from Dr. Stohr: "War started — business relations severed — cannot do anything any more."

He and his wife, Manja, whom he had met and married after arriving in New York City, were now in a strange country, not knowing anyone and without any source of income. Upon the advice of a German restaurant owner, Mr. Hertzka, the Lobls immediately left for Boston, MA.

They arrived in Boston late on a Friday afternoon. Eight days later, Frederick Lobl and Manja had moved into four rooms, unfurnished, of a 2-story office building (ten stores on the street level and ten offices above). They had purchased furniture and a 2-burner cookstove. Frederick had gotten an order from the barber downstairs, ordered and received the necessary equipment and supplies to fill it, delivered it, and had made over fifty percent profit!

Mr. Lobl wanted to sell his barber tonics nationally. There was a problem. The war was causing transportation problems and shipping one-gallon glass bottles full of liquids was difficult and expensive. He had to think of a better way. He put the dry chemicals and scents into a tablet form and told the barbers to add their own liquids (3 quarts of water and 1 quart of alcohol). Thus, the invention of "Tonico Concentrates" tablets. Twelve

tablets packaged for shipping would not be any larger than the palm of a hand.

Frederick Lobl continued inventing products needed by the hospitals, due to illnesses and the war. Among these inventions were heating pads, hot water bottles, ice bags, inhalers, and rubberized cloth products. One of the best known of these products was the "Wireless" ice bag.

All of these inventions required more room for machinery. Mr. Lobl advertised in the newspapers for factory space. One of the replies came from Judge Dennis D. Sullivan, who was a member of the Industrial Commission of the Middleboro Chamber of Commerce. He persuaded Mr. Lobl to look at a building that he owned and drove him to Middleboro so he could. Frederick Lobl bought the building and passed papers on December 24, 1916.

His new products were sold nationally in about a year, among the buyers was United Drug Company owned by Louis Liggett. By 1919, Lobl Manufacturing Company employed sixty people and the products were being sold internationally (Canada, Ireland, Portugal, and South America).

Mr. Lobl continued to produce "Tonico Concentrates" tablets until about 1918 when the Armistice and the Volstead Act restricted the sale of alcohol. The barbers could no longer mix their own tonics.

On July 29, 1919, Mr. Lobl was in Boston. He did not know that when he returned home that night that a disaster would await him. It was a windy day and embers from the engine of a passing freight train blew into a ground floor open window of the nickel-plating room of the plant. The sawdust on the floor that was saturated with acid and other chemicals ignited. The flames quickly went to loose paper, cardboard cartons, and other combustibles. The floors gave way under the weight of all the machinery. Within three hours, the 3-story plant had collapsed into the cellar hole. There had been no hope of saving the factory because of the intense heat, and lack of water pressure. All the firemen could do was protect the nearby buildings, including the Bryant and Soule grain elevator that was 100 feet away. A heavy rain, the next day, finished putting out the smoldering ruins.

The building had not had any fire sprinklers, consequently insurance rates were high. The insurance coverage for the building and contents was \$35,000.00. The loss was estimated at \$60,000.00. The check just about covered the existing debt.

The fire was reported in the newspapers. Mr. Lobl received many telegrams, telephone calls, and letters from friends, suppliers, and customers offering help. The local merchants offered moral and material support; suppliers offered to replace the machinery and supplies on Mr. Lobl's terms of payment. Other cities



(Cambridge, Waltham, Worcester) offered tax-free status if he would move the business there. Mr. Lobl chose to stay in Middleboro and with the help of the local people was able to purchase the Murdock Parlor Grate foundry. This basically was a 4-story shell of a building — it did not have any electrical wiring, fire sprinklers, heat, power, sanitary facilities, or water. Work started on the old building.

Meanwhile, Mr. Lobl contacted all his customers (duplicated records were kept at the New York City office in the Flatiron Building, 5th Avenue and Broadway and 23rd Street) and assured them that he would rebuild and that their fall season orders would be filled. By mid-September, the company was shipping their products as promised.

Lobl Manufacturing Company became Lobl Manufacturing Company, Inc. in 1919 when Fred L. Bowman, Arthur L. Griffin, Harry Loewenberg, and Simon L. Pilshaw joined the firm.

In the early 1920's, Frederick Lobl invented and patented a rubber hot water bottle that converted to a fountain syringe, ice bag, or internal douche. He called it All-In-One The Little Nurse in the Home. They were sold door-to-door locally for \$3.50 each (\$1.00 for sales commission and \$2.50 for Mr. Lobl) by a New Bedford grandmother in her 30's, Mrs. Minnie Wood. Her sales were so successful that the product went national within three years. Salesmen were hired and kept informed by a newsletter, *The Friendly Chat*, that Frederick Lobl put out. The newsletter contained educational and entertaining articles. The All-In-One continued to be sold until the depression caused sales to drop off.

This business was not only good for Lobl Manufacturing Company, Inc., but also for Middleboro. The constant high volume of mail from the mail order business between 1924 - 1929 met the postal standards for a first class post office. The post office status was raised from second class to first class just before the depression. The post office moved out of a rented section of a building and into its present location in 1932.

In 1937, Frederick Lobl was made an honorary life member of the Middleboro Chamber of Commerce.

Sadness struck in 1938. Manja had been having dizzy spells and headaches for several months. Doctors could not determine the cause. Finally, she was diagnosed to have a brain tumor. Manja died on January 14, 1938, at the age of 46.

Frederick contacted his family in Austria and encouraged them to come to America and stay with him. His mother died two weeks before departure, but his father (84), and three of his brothers (Otto, Robert, and Paul) did come over. They arrived just before World War II started. (Otto owned Hero Manufacturing in Middleboro; Paul served in World War II and is on the Middleboro roster; Robert went to New York City).

## U. S. PATENT OFFICE

MARCH 7, 1944

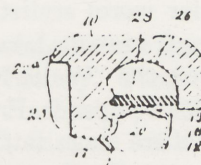
2,343,512

ICE BAG AND CLOSURE THEREFOR

Frederick Lobl, Middleboro, Mass.

Application March 7, 1942, Serial No. 434,999

2 Claims. (Cl. 150-8)



1. A closure seal for two rotatable interengaging members comprising a convex annular abutment on one of said members facing the other member, and an annular groove in said other member open toward said annular abutment and deeper and radially wider than the depth and width of said abutment and adapted to receive said abutment therein, and a normally flat ring of resilient material materially thinner than the depth of the groove and having radial extent approximately equal to the radial width of said groove fitting within the entrance of said groove above the bottom thereof and movable bridging said groove from side wall to side wall thereof and having its inner and outer edges only seated on the inner and outer side walls of the groove and positioned in the path of movement of said abutment, the groove walls being convergent toward the mid part of the groove and being smoothly continuous at least in substantial part to the bottom of the groove so that a seated edge of the ring is free to slide along the wall with increasing transverse flexure thereof when the ring is forcibly engaged by said abutment, and means interengaging said members being arranged upon relative rotation of the members to gradually draw the members together to force the top of said abutment against the mid part of said ring and to flex said ring about its inner and outer edges into the groove with decreasing radial width of the ring and increasing resistance to flexure, said resilient ring simultaneously maintaining sealing pressure between said abutment and space apart surface portions of said groove by reason of the flexed condition of said resilient ring, the relative dimensions of said groove, ring and abutment being such that the ring is pushed bodily deeper and deeper into the groove with increased flexure of the ring and is free of pinching against the side walls of the groove.

In 1954, the Lobl Manufacturing Company, Inc. merged and became a subsidiary of Faultless Rubber Company of Ashland, Ohio. Two years later, 1956, Northern Electric purchased the Lobl portion and moved the business to the mid-west.

Mr. Lobl contributed greatly to his community. He was a member of the Middleboro Elks, member of the Middleboro Lions, and founder of the Council on Aging. He was instrumental in bringing several businesses to Middleboro. He contributed to such causes as elderly housing and an addition to St. Luke's Hospital. He was also appointed Chancellor to the President of Brandeis University.

In retirement, Frederick Lobl again turned to writing. The title of his first Book, *Don't Pay for Water*, originated from his first advertising campaign for "Tonico Concentrates". The book was published in 1959. A second book, *Life is a Bargain An Intriguing Legacy of Living History from a Newspaper on a Park Bench*, was published in 1969.

Frederick Lobl died while on vacation in Miami, FL on Sunday, February 14, 1971 at the age of 84. He is buried in Taunton at the Mount Nebo Cemetery.



## REFERENCES

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U. S. Patent Office Official Gazette - various years

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Frederick Lobl

1959

Vantage Press, Inc., New York

*History of the Town of Middleboro, Massachusetts*

Thomas Weston, A.M. of the Suffolk Bar

1906

Houghton, Mifflin and Company, Boston and New York

The Riverside Press, Cambridge

*History of The Town of Middleboro, Massachusetts*

Volume II

Mertie E. Romaine

1969

Reynolds-DeWalt Printing, Inc., New Bedford, MA

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*Massachusetts*

Volume III

Elroy S. Thompson

1928

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*Life Is A "Bargain" An Intriguing Legacy of Living*

*History from a Newspaper on a Park Bench*

1969

Liveright Publishing Corporation, New York

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*Boston Globe* February 16, 1971

*Boston Herald* February 16, 1971

*Middleboro Gazette* August 1, 1919

*Middleboro Gazette* January 14, 1938

*Middleboro Gazette* March 10, 1960

*Middleboro Gazette* February 18, 1971



FREDERICK LOBL

## U. S. PATENT OFFICE

MARCH 14, 1940

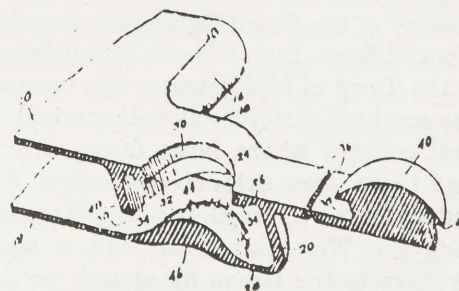
2,200,395

CONTAINER

Frederick Lobl, Middleboro, Mass.

Application November 19, 1937, Serial No. 175,445

4 Claims. (Cl. 150-8)



1. A molded rubber hot water bottle having top and bottom flat walls, the top wall having an opening through which the contents of the bottle are adapted to pass, a flexible tab integral with the body of the bottle and projecting outwardly therefrom, the tab carrying a sealing member which is conformed to the configuration of said opening and is arranged to enter and plug said opening upon the flexure of said tab, said opening having a flexible circumscribing lip projecting from the inner face of the wall into the interior of said bottle which grips the sealing member circumferentially, and said sealing member having a circumferentially continuous outstanding head adapted to pass through said opening and to overlie and be seated upon said lip, all parts being integrally molded in one piece and all composed of the same material.

JULY 6, 1943

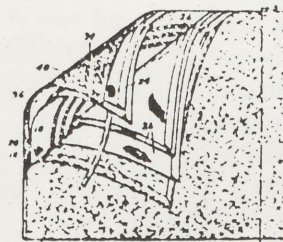
2,323,478

ELECTRIC HEATING PAD

Frederick Lobl, Middleboro, Mass.

Application May 3, 1941, Serial No. 391,728

9 Claims. (Cl. 219-46)



1. An electric heating pad having opposed covers each arranged for alternate engagement with the body of the user and an interposed heating element, one cover having flocked surface upon relatively impervious backing and the other cover being pervious and presenting a surface of long loose fibres.



# Memories of the Third Calvinistic Baptist Church at Rock

by Marion Thomas Whipple  
Photography by Warren B. Whipple

The history of the Third Calvinistic Baptist Church begins, not at Rock, but at South Middleboro.

When the Town of Middleberry was incorporated in 1669, the southern district was still sparsely settled. It was rural country where large farms covered many acres and there were extensive woodlots. For nearly one hundred years, the settlers along Wareham Street and along the Weweantic trail had to travel eight miles or more to the Green for church services, town meetings, burial services, and social events. Occasionally an itinerant minister would hold a service in a private home, but South Middleboro was slow to develop a cohesive village life of its own.

In 1761 ten persons organized the Third Baptist Church of Middleboro under the dynamic leadership of Rev. Ebenezer Jones who attracted members from South Middleboro, Carver, Rochester, and Wareham. Meetings were held in private homes until a meetinghouse could be built on the site of the present Methodist Church with the village cemetery in the church yard. It was called the Spruce Meetinghouse, and became the social center of the suddenly fast-growing village of South Middleboro.

While the church was the social and spiritual center of life in South Middleboro, the Stillwater Furnace on Black Brook was doing a big business in military supplies for the French and Indian Wars. Several hundred people were employed in a wide variety of jobs, thus creating a financial base for the rapidly growing village.

After a brief interval, Rev. Jones was followed by Rev. Asa Hunt. Mr. Hunt of Braintree had served in the French and Indian Wars and was searching for a permanent vocation when he joined Elder Backus' congregation at Titicut (North Middleboro). He became an itinerant Baptist preacher, and two years later (1771) he was called to be pastor at South Middleboro. He and Elder Backus worked together for religious liberty in America, and frequently exchanged pulpits for the enrichment of their parishes. Rev. Hunt also continued to travel extensively as a representative of the Baptist (Separate) Church in southeastern New England. Many new members were attracted to his Church, including Deborah Sampson who was a bond servant on the farm of Jeremiah Thomas in Middleboro Center. She was reprimanded for missing too many services when "she only had to walk eight miles". After her

military service in the American Revolution she was expelled from the congregation for wearing men's clothing. For this, the Church is remembered in Middleboro's history. It is generally forgotten that Rev. Hunt was a beloved pastor who was a strong influence in the growing community of South Middleboro.

Money was always a problem for ministers of the Separate Churches as compared to the Standing Churches that received support from the government. Rev. Hunt fell deeper and deeper into debt until he requested that his parishioners dismiss him in his disgrace. In 1789 they did. He moved to Pennsylvania and later died in Rhode Island, no doubt believing he had been a failure. On the contrary, for eighteen years he had been an influence for much good in South Middleboro and in the national campaign for religious freedom in the new nation of the U.S.A.

Five years later, Rev. Samuel Nelson became the Church's Pastor. He was a local person, grandson of the well-known Lakeville family. An increasing number of Church members were moving to Beaver Dam (The Rock), and so he held services in both communities. At Beaver Dam the meetings were held in private homes, often in the parsonage on the bend in the road of Miller Street. The Rock Baptists dreamed of having their own meetinghouse on the hilltop on Highland Street, and here they started their own cemetery in 1791 with the burial of Eunice Barrows, age 22. At last the Baptists dream came true (1795). The South Middleboro property was sold to the Methodists, and the new meetinghouse at Rock with its sixty-eight pews was small but adequate. Mr. Nelson continued to attract new members and stayed on as minister until his death at the age of 77. "Mr. Nelson's Church" was a village center serving all denominations. The churchyard cemetery with its old slate stones is still there.

After a half century of use, the Rock church was replaced with the beautiful New England meetinghouse pictured in *Weston's History*, p.478. Recently Hazel Rowley found the negative for this picture among her family treasures, and it will now be given to the Middleboro Historical Society along with this story of the Church's history. This was the Church in which my father, Ernest Thomas, and his brother Waldo grew up and for which my grandfather, Alfred Thomas, kept the papers in a candy box in his kitchen desk until in



his old age he sent them to the Baptist headquarters for safekeeping. The Church was the spiritual and social center of Rock Village for members and non-members alike.

Across the road, in the front row of Hope's Rest Cemetery, is the grave of George Eastman, Civil War veteran from Illinois and his wife Priscilla ("P.C.") Pratt from the Highlands of Rock.

Disaster struck the church early in this century when the steeple was hit by lightning in a freak December storm in 1918, and the building burned to the ground. Only a few mementos were saved. Our family kept a picture on the living room wall and used a pew as a garden seat. The cellarhole is now covered by a Memorial Chapel that was erected by the Rock Cemetery association and is used occasionally for burial services.

After the fire, the members of the Rock Baptist Church were forced to accept the offer of the "Chapelites" of the Independent Congregational Church on Miller Street to merge their congregations under one pastor. Thus the religious schism in the village was healed and outwardly the union of the two congregations was a success, however each organization had its own officers and conducted its own business. New members could choose which denomination they were joining, or they could be neutral and join the Rock Village Church. The three annual meetings were held simultaneously and then the three

groups joined together for supper. In the course of time, as the original members died, the union became complete, and although the Baptist origin has not been forgotten, the Church is now called the Evangelical Church. The building of the Third Calvinistic Baptist Church at Rock is just a memory, but its influence still lives in the "Chapel" on Miller Street.

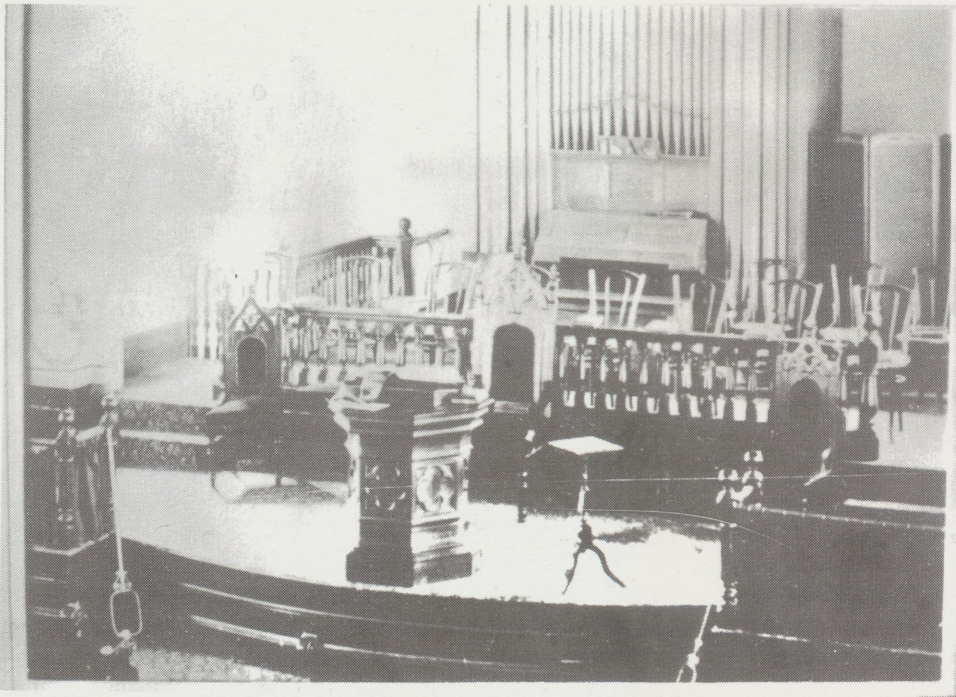
Many changes have taken place in Rock Village since the fire in 1918. The railroad was responsible for transforming the community into an active, prosperous neighborhood. The village center moved from the hilltop to the intersection of Miller and Smith Streets. Rock Pond was created. The Atwood Box Mill employed every man who wanted to work, and every family did a little farming on the side. The houses were kept in repair and neatly painted. It was an attractive village that had its own school, church, library, general store, post office, railroad depot, mill, doctor, and barber. The commuter trains ran express between Rock and Boston's South Station. Trolley cars ran through Middleboro to Onset. Rock was a self-sufficient community until the mill burned, the post office was closed, and trains and trolley cars were discontinued, all in the era of F.D.R.

Rock is now a bedroom community. Once again the houses are well-kept and the general appearance indicates prosperity, but there is no economic opportunity in the Rock. The people must commute elsewhere for jobs and services.

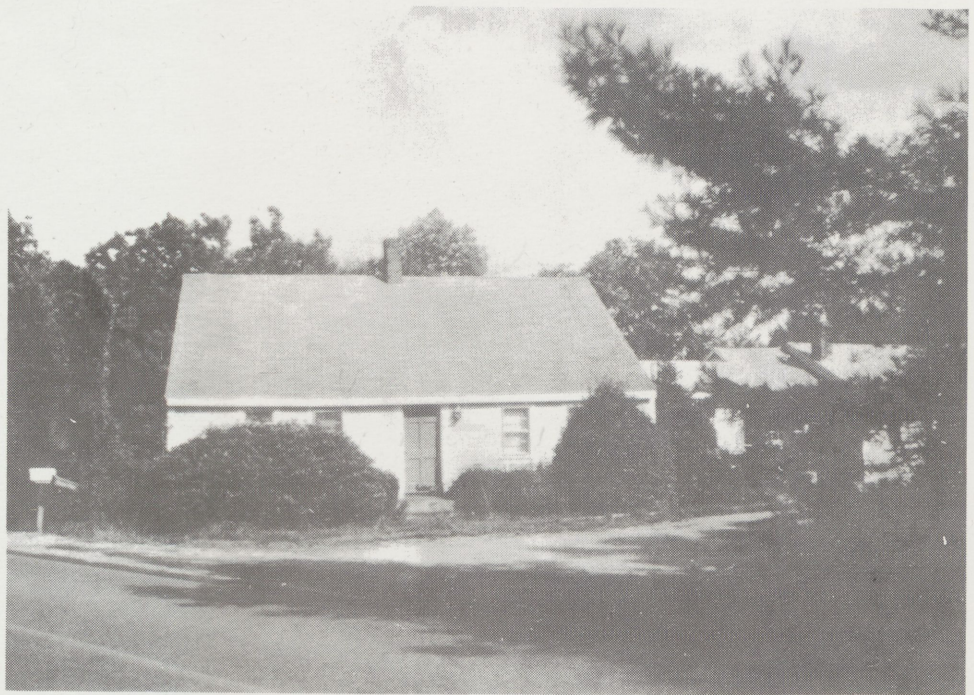


FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH AT ROCK  
1852-1918





**CHURCH'S INTERIOR VIEW**

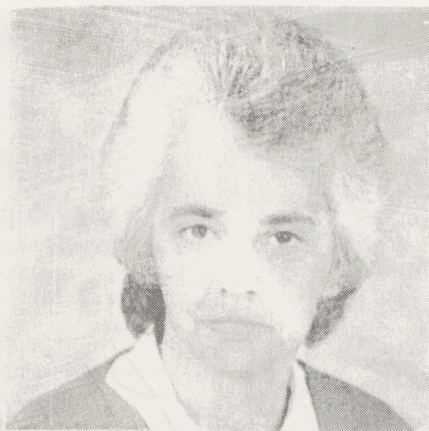


**THE OLD PARSONAGE**  
Miller Street  
c. 1795





MEMORIAL CHAPEL ON SITE OF  
BAPTIST CHURCH



## Message From the President

Hello, let me introduce myself. My name is Dorothy F. Thayer. I have been a member of the Middleborough Historical Association, Inc. since 1985. I serve on the museum committee and have served on the nominating committee. I am a social studies teacher at Middleborough High School where one of the courses I teach is Middleborough Past & Present. My goals, as president of the association, are to get more members actively involved in the association and to create programs of interest for the schools and community. Neither of these goals can be accomplished without your help. I look forward to working with many of you in the months ahead.

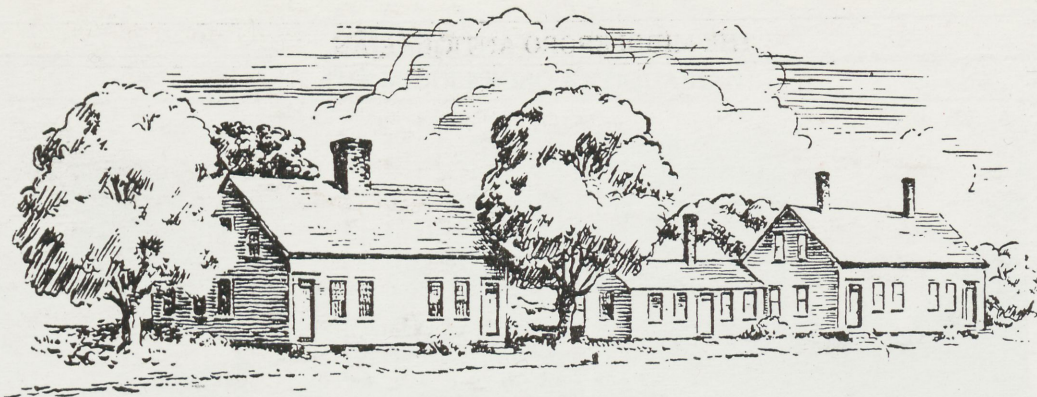
## Officers of the Association

<i>President</i> .....	Dorothy Thayer
<i>Vice President</i> .....	Thomas Weston
<i>Secretary</i> .....	Gladys M. Beals
<i>Treasurer</i> .....	Ann M. Ventura
<i>Directors</i> .....	Eileen L. Atkins Thomas A. Maddigan Cynthia B. McNair
<i>Curator</i> .....	Marsha Manchester

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MIDDLEBOROUGH HISTORICAL MUSEUM  
MIDDLEBORO, MASSACHUSETTS

Jackson Street, off Route 105 (behind the police station)

The museum complex includes seven buildings that contain many different collections. Featured is the Tom Thumb and his lady memorabilia and collection.

ADMISSION:

\$2.00 for adults  
\$1.00 for students

Open seasonal or by appointment  
Call Dorothy Thayer 947-2596

MIDDLEBOROUGH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION, INC.  
P.O. Box 304  
Middleboro, Massachusetts  
02346

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